

BIOPLASTICS ACCELERATE INTO THE MARKET

ABOUT EARTH RENEWABLE TECHNOLOGIES. Based in Brevard, NC, Earth Renewable Technologies (ERT) aims to create conventional, recycled and biobased polymers. Their innovative microfiber concentrate additive technology supports performance and sustainability benefits in plastics modification.

Their polymeric microfiber can be used as an additive to strengthen polymers and improve their recyclability, providing solutions for any industry that has a desire to reduce their use of petroleum based plastics. ERT's products not only strengthen the plastics they're compounded with, they even offer a product that's derived from plants and other renewable agricultural, marine, and forestry materials that recently passed American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) standards for biodegradability.

THE CHALLENGE. As a start-up, ERT had to answer some hard questions. Can our products be compounded mechanically? Does the finished product pass testing? Can it be priced competitively? Can it pass customer stability testing? That's when ERT turned to the Polymer Center for Excellence (PCE) in Charlotte, NC, a partner of the North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership. They decided to leverage PCE as a "knowledge resource" for processing and material development and assistance; product design and development; and property testing and failure analysis.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. The Polymer Center for Excellence (PCE), an NCMEP partner, provided production and product development expertise, as well as access to expensive equipment. PCE was able to help ERT in the early phases of the company's organizational development. "We didn't have in-house production capabilities, so having access to a variety of instrumentation, both with compounding sample production as well as the laboratory facility, was very attractive to us," said Carmen Finnessy, ERT's Director of Technology. "It was a much more cost effective route for us to come here and use a variety of twin screw sizes, for instance, that we wouldn't have had access to anywhere else."

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-Carmen Finnessy, Director of Technology

RESULTS



Product development cycle time cut and inefficiencies reduced



Had access to a variety of PCE's instrumentation tools without having to purchase them



Time to market was sped up

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